CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Northwest Energy ROW/LUL
Proposed Implementation Date:	Fall 2011
Proponent:	Northwest Energy
Location:	SW section 8 T13N R4W
County:	Lewis & Clark
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

NorthWestern Energy is requesting a right of way easement and construction Land Use License for facilities on state land in nw1/4 section 8 T13N R4W.The proposed easement and license would allow the construction of a 7200 kv underground power line. The power line would replace an existing overhead line that has reached the end of it's design life. State land involved would be a 30' power line row totaling 1.93 acres. The temporary construction license would involve an additional width totaling 100'adjacent to the power line and allow flexibility for equipment access and operation. The facilities on the state land are part of a larger project to increase reliability. The route would follow the existing 20'' buried gas line.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Lessees of the state tract were contacted as well as adjacent owners.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

None.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

1. Issuing the easement and license as proposed.
2. Not issuing the easement or license.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

None. The project is located adjacent to a previous row that has responded well to previous reclamation.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

None. No surface water is present on the State tract. Ground water should not be impacted.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

None. The small size of disturbed area will limit impacts.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

None. No rare plants or types are present. Previous disturbance has responded well to revegitation. Minor disturbance with installation will be mitigated with required reseeding.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

None. The small size of the project on state land will limit impacts.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

None. No T&E species have been identified on the tract.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

None. The area has been previously disturbed with no evidence of resources.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

None. The short term duration and limited nature of the project would be of minimal impact.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

None. The current use of the state land is grazing and no impacts are expected.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

None. There are currently easements for the existing 20'' gas line on this tract. The construction license will require full reclamation in the event the easement is not granted.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:
Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

None.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:
Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

None.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:
Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

None.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:
Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

None.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:
Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

None.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:
List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

None. The state land is currently leased for grazing.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:
Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

None. The tract is currently accessible under the block management program.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:
Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

None.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

None.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

None.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

Issuing the easement and license would result in some income (~$965.00 + $150.00 LUL) to the state. The location would be adjacent to and compatible with existing facilities and uses.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Robert Vlahovich	**Date:**	10/19/11
	Title:	Spec uses coord.		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

I have selected the alternative to issue the LUL construction license and recommend issuance of the easement to the Land Board.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The small size of the project on State land will limit impacts. Easement and License stipulations will require regrading to contour and reseeding. Previous disturbance has responded well to reclamation.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐ EIS ☐ More Detailed EA ☐ No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	D.J. Bakken		
	Title:	Helena Unit Manager		
Signature:			**Date**:	10/24/2011